

Message Text

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INFO HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 106136

FOLLOWING REPEAT HAVANA 1056 ACTION SECSTATE DATED APRIL 24, 1978.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 1056

DEPT PLEASE PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV MILI ET SO CU

SUBJ: MENGISTU VISIT TO CUBA

REF: HAVANA 1037

1. SUMMARY: MENGISTU ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED IN CUBA.
HE THREATENS MILITARY SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA BUT CASTRO
AVOIDS PUBLIC COMMENT ON THIS SO FAR. END SUMMARY

2. MENGISTU WAS RECEIVED IN CUBA, APRIL 21, BY THOUSANDS
OF CUBANS MOBILIZED BY GOVERNMENT TO LINE FIFTEEN MILE
ROUTE BETWEEN AIRPORT AND PROTOCOL HOUSE. DESPITE SPORADIC
RAIN AND 3-HOUR DELAY IN MENGISTU'S ARRIVAL FROM LUANDA
(WHERE HE REPORTEDLY CONFERRED WITH NETO JUST BACK FROM
MOSCOW), CROWD HELD ITS PLACES--IN SOME CASES FOR UP TO
SEVEN HOURS--AND GREETED MENGISTU AND CASTRO IN APPARENTLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 106136

JUBILANT SPIRITS. (COMMENT: USINT OFFICER MINGLED WITH
CROWD IN SEVERAL LOCATIIONS. MOST WERE HAPPY TO HAVE BEEN
RELEASED FROM WORK AND TO HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO
THEIR NEIGHBORS. ALTHOUGH CASTRO AND ETHIOPIAN LEADER
TRAVLED IN OPEN CAR AND CROWD WAS ALLOWED TO GET CLOSE,
SOLDIERS OCCUPIED BUILDINGS ALONG PARADE ROUTE AND
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TROOPS WERE HELD IN READINESS

IN BACK STREETS IN EVENT OF TROUBLE. AS FAR AS WE
COULD SEE, HOWEVER, CROWDS WERE ORDERLY AND APPROPRIATELY
ENTHUSIASTIC.)

3. MENGISTU DELEGATION (SEE REFTTEL), APRIL 22, BEGAN TALKS WITH
CUBAN DELEGATION HEADED BY FIDEL AND RAUL CASTRO.
MILITARY COMPONENT APPARENTLY FIGURES HEAVILY IN TALKS,
GIVEN REPORTED PARTICIPATION OF CUBAN CHIEF OF STAFF
GENERAL SENEN CASAS, COMMANDER IN ETHIOPIA GENERAL ARNALDO
OCHOA, AND EX-ANGOLAN FORCES CHIEF GENERAL ABELARDO COLONE.
OTHER CUBAN DELEGATION MEMBERS INCLUDE OLD-TIME COMMUNIST
POLITBURO MEMBERS CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ, BLAS ROCA, AND
ARNALDO MILIAN (WHO AT LEAST SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENT MOSCOW
LINE), PLUS PLITBURO MEMBERS RAMIRO VALDES, GUILLERMO
GARCIA, OSVALDO DORTICOS, ARMANDO HART, PEDRO MIRET, AND
MINISTER OF INTERIO SERGIO DEL VALLE. (DEL VALLE, APRIL 12,
RETURNED TO CUBA ON FLIGHT FROM HUNGARY. HIS WHEREABOUTS
DURING EARLIER PART OF MONTH ARE NOT KNOWN TO US.) OTHER
CUBAN DELEGATION MEMBERS INCLUDE CP SECRETARIAT MEMBERS
RAUL VALDES VIVO (CHARGED WITH FRATERNAL PARTY TIES) AND
ANTONIO PEREZ HERRERO AND CHIEF OF GENERAL FOREIGN
RELATIONS DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNIST PARTY LIONEL SOTO.

4. MENGISTU ON APRIL 22 WAS AWARDED PLAYA GIRON
(BAY OF PIGS) MEDAL. IN HIS REMARKS, HE TOOK VERBAL
JAB AT US IN CONNECTION WITH BAY OF PIGS, BUT DREW
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PAGE 03 STATE 106136

NO CONTEMPORARY LINK BETWEEN US AND HORN CRISIS. MOST
INTERESTING, HOWEVER, WAS MENGISTU'S STATEMENT THAT
ETHIOPIA HAS STILL NOT DEFEATED ERITREAN REBELS WHO
NOW ARE "GUIDED, COORDINATED, AND SUPPORTED" BY
IMPERIALISM AND ARAB REACTIONARIES. MENGISTU SAID THAT
REPEATED ETHIOPIAN PROPOSALS, WHICH STILL STAND, FOR
PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM HAVE BEEN IGNORED.
THUS, ONLY SOLUTION IS TO "RAISE ARMS IN ONE HAND, AND, AT
THE SAME TIME, EXTEND OTHER HAND AS SIGNAL OF PEACE".
MENGISTU THEN ADDED THAT HE HAS "ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE" THAT
CUBANS AND OTHER "PROGRESSIVE FORCES" WILL BE ENTIRELY
ON ETHIOPIAN SIDE ON THIS MATTER. CASTRO, READING FROM
PREPARED TEXT, MADE NO MENTION OF ERITREA AND DID NOT RESPOND
DIRECTLY TO MENGISTU'S REMARKS. (COMMENT: CUBANS CONTINUE
TO REITERATE TO US AND ARAB DIPLOMATS HERE THAT CUBANS
"WILL NOT BE PARTY" TO INVASION OF ERITREA.)

5. MENGISTU, APRIL 24, DEPARTS FOR SANTIAGO DE CUBA AND
IS EXPECTED TO VISIT OTHER INTERIOR LOCATIONS SUCH AS
CAMAGUEY AND ISLE OF PINES. IT IS EXPECTED THAT HE AND
CASTRO WILL GIVE MAJOR PUBLIC SPEECH, EITHER IN ONE OF
THESE LOCATIONS OR LATER IN HAVANA. (WHILE IN

HAVANA, APRIL 22-23, OTHER MEMBERS OF MENGISTU DELEGATION WERE RECEIVED SEPARATELY BY CUBAN NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL COMMUNIST PARTY AND MASS ORGANIZATION OFFICIALS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF INTEREST.)

6. COMMENT: AS EXPECTED, MENGISTU'S VISIT IS RECEIVING EXTRAORDINARILY FULSOME PROPAGANDA TREATMENT BY CUBANS. CASTRO'S DESIRE TO PRESERVE WARM GLOW OF VICTORY AND FRATERNAL SOLIDARITY, OF COURSE, LIMITS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CUBAN LEADER CAN DEFLECT MENGISTU'S OBVIOUSLY STRONG-FELT URGE TO BRING ERITREANS TO HEEL. THEREFORE, WHILE IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT CUBANS WISH TO DO THEIR UTMOST TO CRAFT POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, AND TO AVOID LARGE-SCALE COMBAT INVOLVEMENT IN ERITREA, WE JUDGE IT UNLIKELY, PENDING A POLITICAL SETTLE-
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 STATE 106136

MENT, THAT CASTRO WILL WANT TO MAKE MILITARY TASK HARDER FOR MENGISTU IN ERITREA BY DRAWING DOWN CUBAN TROOPS IN OGADEN WHO PROTECT ADDIS FLANK. INDEED, MAINTAINING CUBAN TROOPS IN OGADEN MAY BE MINIMUM GESTURE CASTRO CAN OFFER IN ORDER TO AVOID ERITREAN INVOLVEMENT.

7. REGARDING POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL TALKS ON ERITREAN PROBLEM HERE DURING MENGISTU VISIT, NONE OF LOCAL DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HAVE YET BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM PRESENCE OF EPLF DELEGATION. (ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, INCIDENTALLY, TOLD USINT CHIEF THAT CUBAN AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS IS SOURCE OF REPORT THAT EPLF WOULD BE COMING HERE.) GEORGE HABBASH HELD MEETING WITH FIDEL CASTRO, APRIL 21, AND PRESS STATEMENT WAS ISSUED, APRIL 24, WHICH GAVE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAS LEFT CUBA. ARAB DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HERE, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT HABBASH REMAINS IN CUBA, TRAVELING IN INTERIOR. END COMMENT.
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